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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000756

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SUBJECT: CZECH POLICY ON IRAN: PROLIFERATION ISSUES AND  
TRAVEL POLICY FOR SCIENTISTS

REF: PRAGUE 745

Classified By: ADCM Mike Dodman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) SUMMARY. This is the second of three cables on Czech-Iranian relations. The Czech Republic's Iran policies and non-proliferation practices strongly support U.S. positions. Concerns have been raised about the impact of acquisition of Czech firms involved in nuclear technologies by Russian companies. Czech officials believe their safeguards will prevent any unauthorized transfers via Russia, and have no evidence of any assistance to the Iranian nuclear program by Czech firms or individuals. The Czechs aim to avoid a repeat of this spring's private nuclear research conference in the Czech Republic that was attended by an Iranian scientist. END SUMMARY.

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GOCR Supports a Tough Line with Teheran in the IAEA  
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12. (C) The GOCR's Iran policy is strongly supportive of U.S. positions. The Czechs maintain that a successful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue would require not only Iran's return to IAEA supervision and its full compliance with the NPT, but also a confident IAEA "certification" that Iran is conducting no undeclared nuclear activities. In discussions with the Embassy, officials across the GOCR expressed a sense of palpable frustration and exasperation with Iran's duplicitous past dealings with the EU3. They are supportive of USG initiatives and support the EU3 package (although some figures, such as conservative MEP Jana Hybaskova oppose any sort of "incentive package" for Iran). Although officials at all levels within the GOCR have expressed their support for a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear standoff, they also publicly support Iran's referral to the UNSC if it fails to comply with NPT obligations.

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Czech Internal Nonproliferation Mechanisms  
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13. (S) The purchase in recent years of two Czech firms by Russian entities -- Skoda JS, which conducts nuclear- and energy-related engineering work, by energy giant OMZ, and Skoda Machine Tools by Stanko Impex -- has heightened concern that Czech nuclear engineering material and knowledge could find their way into Iranian hands. These anxieties are especially acute in light of OMZ's considerable role in the Bushehr project. Czech law, however, specifically forbids any Czech aid for the Bushehr plant, although not for other nuclear plants or projects. Such projects are covered by EU

Regulation 1334 on dual-use technologies (reftel).

14. (S) The GOCR has in place several nonproliferation systems that the Czechs feel are adequate to prevent improper assistance in the form of material or technology transfers to Iran. Any prospective Iranian purchase request would be vetted through a multiagency process, within which the harder-line MFA plays a critical role. According to MFA UN Department official Pavel Klucky, moreover, USG-provided critical technology lists and other information are often quietly used as a basis for deciding to reject or accept proposals.

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Potential Export Control Issues  
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15. (S) Although the possibility that Czech engineering equipment or technologies could be used to facilitate Iran's nuclear program has figured in media reports, Klucky flatly told Poloff that they were unaware of any recent instances of Czech materials entering Iran. Other USG agencies at post generally support Klucky's assertions.

16. (S) As is the situation in many countries, the Czech export control regime does face several potential challenges. This is particularly the case where Skoda and OMZ are concerned. When Poloff asked different officials about the possibility of false end-user certificates enabling surreptitious re-export of Czech nuclear materials to Iran via Russia, all conceded that it is theoretically possible.

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Czech Controls on Travel of Iranian Nuclear Scientists  
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17. (S) Although Czech visa regimes toward Iran are among the very strictest that they employ anywhere in the world (REF A), some substantial weaknesses do exist. While Czech interview procedures and visa adjudication methodologies are extremely similar to ours, Czech consular officers and chiefs of mission have substantial discretion in their visa-issuing procedures and policies. The Czechs have no system analogous to CLASS and do not have biometric capabilities to verify the identity of the applicant. Although visa applicants are screened by security services against a database of names maintained by the Interior Ministry, the vetting system is essentially reactive and dependent upon an accurate self-identification by the applicant. According to MFA Consular Director Ivo Svoboda, moreover, there are no "suspect classes" of applicants whose occupation, specialty, or other background information would trigger a more detailed investigation or adjudication process (i.e. there is nothing comparable to the USG's SAO system).

18. (S/NF) In April 2006 an Iranian scientist specializing in nuclear medicine traveled to the Czech Republic to participate in a nuclear conference in the spa town of Mariánské Lázně. According to media reports however, two of his colleagues were denied visas. Czech MFA officials, despite their stated policy of refusing to discuss particular visa cases, confirmed the substance of this report to Poloff and indicated that the MOI screening process had triggered the denial of the other two applications. Czech MFA officials also indicated that various security and intelligence services have in the past supported particular visa applications for the services' own operational purposes. In the aftermath of this controversial visit, the Czechs passed an informal request to the IAEA that they neither sponsor nor refer any Iranian nuclear scientists to the Czech Republic for seminars or training. According to Klucky (please protect), since Iran is not officially an IAEA-sanctioned state, these additional Czech measures are technically contrary to the letter of the NPT.

